

Message Text

SECRET

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46

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 ACDA-07 SCCT-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1510

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T KHARTOUM 1071

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: INFORMING GOS ON PEACE LION

REF: STATE 086565

BEGIN SUMMARY. NIMEIRI WAS BRIEFED APRIL 14 RE PEACE LION DELIVERY. HE NOTED ERITREANS WOULD BE UPSET BUT OTHERWISE WAS NOT CRITICAL, THOUGH HE VOICED HOPE DELIVERY COULD BE DELAYED SEVERAL WEEKS. BELIEVE ADVANCE BRIEFING WAS USEFUL IN LIMITING DAMAGE WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE OCCURRED WHEN NEWS BECOMES PUBLIC. END SUMMARY.

1. WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT NIMEIRI AFTERNOON APRIL 14 TO BRIEF HIM RE IMPENDING DELIVERY EIGHT F-5E AIRCRAFT TO ETHIOPIA. RECALLING BACKGROUND AND ON-GOING NATURE OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA SINCE 1953, I STRESSED THAT OUR PROGRAMS WERE ROOTED IN STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS. ONLY ANTI-WESTERN POWERS WOULD PROFIT IF WE TO IGNORE THIS HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY. MOREOVER, SUCH RELATIONSHIP INHERENTLY HAD TO BE CONTINUING IN NATURE TO BE EFFECTIVE AND HENCE IT COULD NOT BE TURNED ON AND OFF IN RESPONSE TO TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS. BECAUSE OF OUR VALUED CONTACTS WITH HIM, I SAID I HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED LAST WEEK TO INFORM NIMEIRI FOR HIS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION OF AN IMPENDING

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FURTHER ARMS SALE TO ETHIOPIA PURSUANT TO THIS LONG-STANDING

RELATIONSHIP.

2. I THEN TOLD NIMEIRI THAT EIGHT F-5E AIRCRAFT WOULD BE DELIVERED TO ETHIOPIA ON OR SHORTLY AFTER APRIL 15. THIS WAS AIR DEFENSE INTERCEPTOR AND WAS BEING ACQUIRED PRIMARILY FOR AIR DEFENSE USES. ITS ACQUISITION WAS RELATED TO IMBALANCE IN FAVOR OF SOMALIA CREATED BY SOVIET SUPPLY IN RECENT YEARS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING MIG-21S. TRANSACTION WAS WHOLLY A CASH PURCHASE AND CULMINATED DISCUSSIONS BEGUN OVER TWO YEARS AGO. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IT WAS CLEAR THAT DELIVERY WAS UNRELATED TO ANY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AREA. STRESSING THAT TRANSACTION BEING VERY CLOSELY HELD WITHIN USG I SAID WE PLANNED NO ANNOUNCEMENT ON ARRIVAL AIRCRAFT. PRESS WOULD NO DOUBT BEGIN ASKING QUESTIONS SOON THEREAFTER, HOWEVER. WE WOULD THEN STRESS THAT TRANSACTION DATED BACK OVER TWO YEARS, THAT IT FITS INTO LONG-RANGE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM ON WHICH WE LONG AGO HAD AGREED TO HELP, AND THAT ENTIRE DEAL IS IN CASH.

3. NIMEIRI REPLIED IMMEDIATELY THAT ERITREANS WILL NOT LIKE THIS LATEST TRANSACTION. HE HIMSELF COULD SEE JUSTIFICATION IN TERMS AREA CONSIDERATIONS. HOWEVER, HE NOTED VIOLATIONS SUDANESE AIR SPACE EARLY THIS YEAR HAD BEEN BY F-5S, THAT NEW PLANES WOULD NO DOUBT BE USED AGAINST ERITREANS AND THAT THAT WAS PROBABLY WHY EPMG WAS WILLING PAY CASH FOR THEM. HE SPECULATED AS TO WHETHER DELIVERY COULD BE DEFERRED FOR SEVERAL WEEKS BUT DID NOT PRESS THIS POINT. PRESIDENT COMMENTED THAT HE HAD FOUND ERITREANS DIFFICULT PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH, TOUGH AND LACKING IN EDUCATION. THEY COULD NOT BE EXPECTED UNDERSTAND WIDER STRATEGIC ISSUES BEHIND AIRCRAFT DELIVERY. I RESPONDED THAT PLANES WERE BEING PROVIDED ETHIOPIA IN TERMS OF STRENGTHENING THAT COUNTRY'S LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENSE. AS HE KNEW, WE SUPPORTED HIS MEDIATION INITIATIVE AND HOPED ERITREAN PROBLEM COULD BE SETTLED PEACEFULLY.

4. COMMENT. NIMEIRI WAS PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN SINGLED OUT FOR BRIEFING IN ADVANCE OF DELIVERY OF F-5ES. OTHER THAN CITING OBVIOUS FACT THAT ERITREANS WILL REACT NEGATIVELY

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HE DID NOT VOICE ANY CRITICISM OTHER THAN WITH RESPECT TIMING. BELIEVE THIS DAMAGE-LIMITING EXERCISE HAS BEEN HELPFUL AND THAT SUDANESE REACTION WHEN TRANSACTION BECOMES KNOWN SHOULD CORRESPONDINGLY BE LIMITED.
BREWER

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